

The

Historian

of Hancock County

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

JULY 1996

JULY HAPPENING

We have a great event planned for our regular monthly luncheon meeting at the Lobrano House. On Thursday, July 18th Gene Daymude of New Orleans will be our guest speaker. Mr. Daymude is a licensed auctioneer in Louisiana and Georgia. He has been a private consultant and fine art dealer for the last 16 years. His subject will be "The Art and Antique Market and You".

As a favor to the Historical Society, Mr. Daymude will appraise articles dating from the 15th through the 20 century that you bring in and will help you determine both their value and the best market for selling. There will be a \$5 charge for each item that he appraises. He will donate the fees to the Society. If you have any paintings, sculpture, collectibles or furniture that you have been wanting appraised, this is an excellent opportunity to learn their value for a fraction of the usual charge. Because of the rapidly changing market, he will refer questions about silver, jewelry, rugs, figurines, etc. to other qualified sources most active in that market.

Please phone 467-4090 for reservations for lunch before July 16th. As usual, the charge for lunch will be \$5.



THE BLUE STORE

August Keller's Blue Store, on Front Street (now Beach Boulevard) at Washington Street flourished at the turn of the century, outfitting locals and weekenders alike with a variety of personal, home and barn equipment.

Its advertisements in the Sea Coast Echo in the early 1890s boasted Brussels rugs, "Gents furnishings," quilts, wagons, crockery, furniture, harness, groceries, liquor, "and in fact anything wanted."

Special sales preceded new merchandise shipments: "The Blue Store will close out their straw hats at cost to make room for the immense fall stock now on the way from the East," said one

1892 ad. The same ad announces a closeout on "6 dozen Misses Canvass Shoes, laced and buttoned at 50 cts a pair. These shoes sold originally for \$1.00. Sizes 8 to 2." The Blue Store housed Hancock County's first bank, preceding the establishment of Hancock and Merchants banks in 1899 and 1903 respectively. Sheriff Joseph F. Cazeneuve had allowed citizens to use his jail-house safe to stash their valuables, but the first banking was conducted by Blue Store employee John Osoinach who added the issuing and cashing of checks to the operation out of the large safe in a recess behind the Blue Store. (Osoinach opened his own store later.)

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The Blue Store was destroyed by fire in February 1894. A few days later, the Sea Coast Echo reported: "Mr. August Keller, one of the most progressive and wide awake merchants of the Bay, almost immediately after losing his mammoth 'BLUE STORE' last Saturday, went to work with vim and determination and rented the store building opposite and owned by Mr. Frank Taconi and opened the 'RED STORE.' There are few towns that can boast of such deserving and energetic business men like that of his kind. ' The Red Store, like the Blue Store, sported bright paint the color of its name. The site of the Red Store is occupied today by Big E Grocery. This building has also housed the Bay Waveland Yacht Club, the Ortte and the Star theaters.

EERIE SPOTS

In several places on our lake coast there are spots, usually of a few hundred yards in diameter, where the needle of the surveyor's compass loses all at once its cunning, and will oscillate and spin round as if possessed. Several of these places are near the West Pearl River opposite Fort Pike, in the marsh. Another one nearer home is on Judge Daniels' plantation on Mulatto Bayou, in a swamp skirting between the swamp and the high land above the great shell bank.

The local cause of this phenomenon would be an interesting question for the State Geologist to investigate. (From the Daily Picayune, Jan. 18, 1868.)

THE AMAZING CORONER BEECHER

Our respected fellow citizen, W.A. Beecher, Esq., late of Mel-pomenia was, we learn, elected Coroner of Bay St. Louis by a flattering majority.

Mr. Beecher is eminently qualified to administer "Coroner's Quest Law" in style satisfactory to both living and dead.

The solemnity of his manner, the gravity of his countenance, and the weight of his person, will enable him to set upon a dead body in a manner which will place the fact of the death of the party beyond all dispute.

Mr. B. is also an admirable fisherman and angler, and as most of the cases of sudden death, near the Bay, occur from drowning, he will be able to hook up the bodies with the same skill with which he is wont to hook the black trout in the Wolf River.

We learn that Mr. B's zeal to enter upon the duties of his office was displayed, shortly after his election, in rather a striking manner.

Two Italians having gotten into a fierce fight about the election, some persons called out "part them." "No, no," fiercely interrupted the new Coroner. "Let them fight it out, and give your new Coroner a chance to sit upon the body of one of them."

This intimidation produced a very sudden cessation of hostilities between the parties. (From the Daily Delta, Nov. 11, 1851.)

VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME AT LOBRANO HOUSE

MEMBERS PLAN AMTRAK NEW ORLEANS OUTING

Our August 15th meeting will be a round-trip to New Orleans on Amtrak., departing about 8 a.m. and returning about 7 p.m. The rail ticket will be approximately \$18.00. Thanks to Barbara Blackburn of Casino Magic and Mona Santiago of Flamingo, bus transportation will be provided between the depot and Riverwalk. Sightseeing and lunch may be scheduled according to your own preference either individually or in groups.

The train ticket cost may be paid for at the July 18th meeting, at which time additional information will be available. Final date for reservations is July 25.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our guest speaker for July, Gene Daymude, is the son of the well known Louisiana artist, Gene Daymude. I was fortunate enough to know the senior gentleman and to own one his major works, "The Burning of Rome" which he created especially for my home in the French Quarter.

We continue to have large numbers of visitors to the Lobrano House. We often still have a full house at closing time.

Due to the generosity of the City of Bay Saint Louis we are able to fund our five-day-a-week operation for the next five months. We hope to persuade both Waveland and Hancock County to assist so that we can continue this full-time operation. Please ask your Councilman, Alderman or Supervisor to help.



ELMWOOD, THE COWAND PLANTATION

Located at North Beach Boulevard between Boardman Street and Leonhard Avenue.

On lands that were granted by Spain in 1786 to Louis Alesis Lassassier and confirmed by France in 1794, Elmwood Plantation's foundations were laid about 1804. The walls of the mansion were constructed from brick brought from Spain and Portugal as ballast in sailing vessels and are up to five bricks thick. The sills were hewn from cypress logs floated down the Mississippi River.

The War of 1812 and death of Monsieur Lassassier delayed the construction work until the property was purchased in 1826 by Jesse Cowand, a sea captain, who migrated from Virginia to New Orleans. He was taken prisoner by the British at the Battle of Chalmette.

After the war, he purchased Elmwood and, while cultivating Sea Cotton on the lands, he directed the completion of his home. The two story brick building is put together with wooden pegs and consists of double parlors, a living room and a library downstairs. Upstairs there are four large bedrooms. Each floor has a twelve foot wide breezeway that runs from the front to the rear galleries which are identical and measure ten and a half feet by fifty-four feet. The front galleries overlook the Bay of Saint Louis from a high point of land encircled by large live oak trees. Mr. Cowand's nautical past explains why each room had a fireplace with mantles displaying hand carved anchors and chains. The double parlors had matching Waterford crystal chandeliers. The original massive hinges and latches remain on most of the doors and shutters.

The plantation had its own cemetery on the grounds (presently on Leopold Street) where Mr. Cowand and many of his family are buried. The home and most of the lands have been sold by his heirs to persons outside the family.

KEEPING THE KIDS BUSY

Parents of the 1890s were as concerned as those of today about keeping their kids out of mischief over the summer.

Here are some problems and solutions cited in the Sea Coast Echo: "Of much concern to parents, wives, churchmen, and city officials in 1896 were the "Blind Tigers" or illegal saloons [dubbed "speakeasies" during Prohibition some 25 years later] operating to avoid paying taxes and license fees. Using bootleg liquor in many instances, these lawbreakers were condemned but popular. Editorials calling for enforcement of laws were run. Warnings to customers were printed.

"A solution to the every-generation worry about the roamings of young people at night was tried in the form of Curfew Laws. These threatened arrest if young people were found on the streets after 9 p.m. Boys were warned and parents too about the evils that dwell in the dark hours."

How to work off all that young energy and be sure the kiddies are asleep in their beds at 9 p.m.? Most efforts were directed at boys, since nobody in those days could admit that young ladies were not satisfied with sitting demurely under parasols with their embroidery hoops or dangling dainty fingers in the water as some young blade rowed the skiff. Besides the usual water sports, baseball was a favorite for the boys in summer, and today for girls as well. A baseball park was built in Bay St Louis in 1897, with Spotorno's Mill supplying the lumber.



Bicycles were popular across the nation between 1890 and 1895, but no one in Bay St. Louis owned one. To meet the demand Mortimer Walker opened a shop where bicycles were rented at 25 cents an hour. It was considered very daring for a young lady to ride a bike but the bicycle craze continued - for both sexes - until the advent of the automobile.

W. J. Watts of Chattanooga, who invented the "chainless bicycle mechanism," retired to Bay St. Louis early in this century and opened a bicycle repair shop on the beach.

By 1896 bicycles were so popular that the city fathers enacted numerous ordinances regulating their use, such as requiring lamps after dark and prohibiting bikes on sidewalks. Local authorities were constantly dealing with the

desire to "scorch or speed to the danger of dogs, chickens, people and the rider."

LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

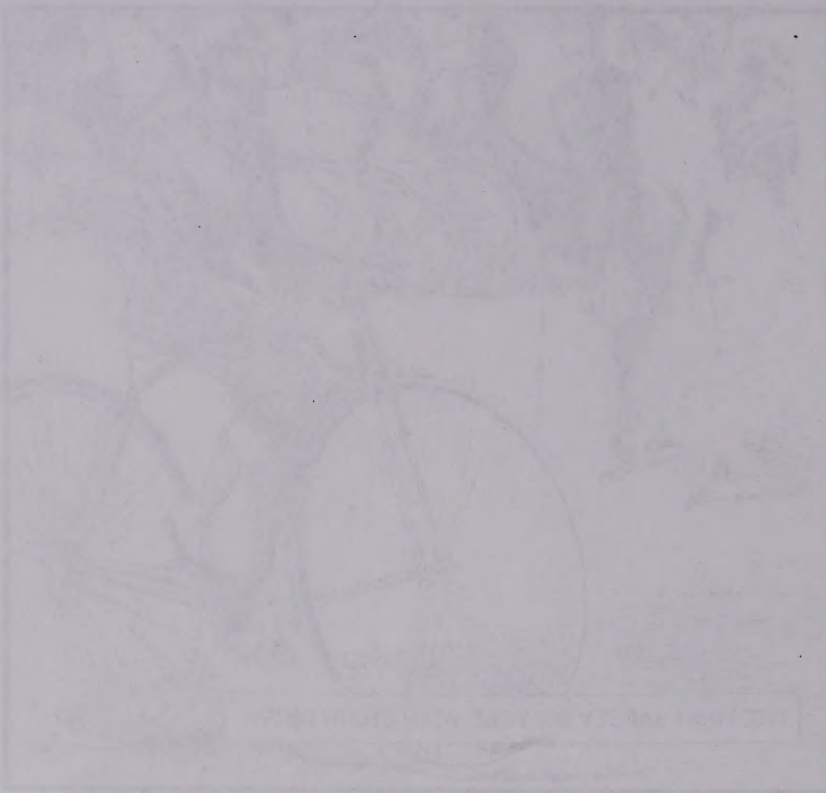
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